

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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**STATEMENT OF REP. EDWARD MARKEY (D-MA) REGARDING THE IMPORTANCE OF
COUNTER-TERROR TRAINING FOR FLIGHT ATTENDANTS
MAY 12, 2004**

Every day, you work hard to keep passengers comfortable and safe. Your job is demanding – the long hours, unpredictable schedules and constant travel can be grueling. And now, in the post-September 11th world, you also are responsible for helping to ensure that the passenger compartment is secure. This is a heavy responsibility that you bear ... with a smile.

Before the terrorist attacks on September 11th, your security training focused on how to handle a hijacking. It emphasized accommodation of hijackers' demands, delaying tactics, and safely landing the airplane. You were advised to refrain from trying to overpower or negotiate with hijackers.

On September 11th, this training offered no defense against the tactics employed by the hijackers of Flights 11, 77, 93, and 175.

In the aftermath of 9/11, it was clear that updated flight attendant training was urgently needed to thwart a new breed of hijacker, who would use a commercial airplane as a missile to kill himself and all the passengers and crew onboard, while inflicting as many casualties as possible on the ground. When Congress passed, and the President signed into law, the Homeland Security Act, it included new requirements for crew training, such as training in: "Methods to restrain and subdue an attacker"; "Appropriate and effective responses to defend oneself, including the use of force against an attacker"; and "Use of available items aboard the aircraft for self-defense." But, despite the pressing need for hands-on counter-terror training, these key components of the security training were made voluntary last December, when the FAA Reauthorization bill was enacted.

The TSA continues to tell us that commercial airliners remain at the top of the terrorist target list. But you are still not receiving meaningful counter-terror training.

A 13-minute video of self-defense techniques is not meaningful. A take-home study guide is not meaningful. Inconsistent or even non-existent security training is not meaningful. We are here today to press forward in our all-out fight to guarantee the type of meaningful, hands-on, counter-terror training that is required in the post-September 11th world.

Three months ago, I introduced H.R. 3798, the Secure Existing Aviation Loopholes (SEAL) Act, to close dangerous security loopholes that remain untouched more than two and a half years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Included in the SEAL Act is a flight attendant training requirement that establishes a deadline of 1 year from the date of enactment of the bill for the Department of Homeland Security to develop the counter-terror training stipulated in the Homeland Security Act and provide it to the flight and cabin crew members of commercial air carriers.

The SEAL Act is important, but we are not waiting for it to make its way through the legislative process. I will offer the SEAL Act's flight attendant training section as an amendment to this year's authorization bill for the Department of Homeland Security.

If the amendment is not included in Committee, I will offer the flight attendant training section as a floor amendment to this year's authorization bill for the Department of Homeland Security.

If the amendment is not included in the authorization bill, I will offer the flight attendant training section as an amendment to the appropriations bill for the Department of Homeland Security.

I am going to keep fighting to restore real, hands-on counter-terror training until every single flight attendant, on every single airline in the country gets the training that's needed to defend passengers and defend themselves against a terrorist trying to take over an airplane.

(More)

Today is an important day in this fight – and we have only just begun to fight!

Our fight for counter-terror training is dedicated to Betty Ong, and all of the crew members of the four planes that were hijacked on September 11th. . They were professionals who died doing their jobs in a manner consistent with the training they had received.

Now times have changed, and terrorists have adopted techniques never contemplated before 9/11. We must respond, and we must ensure that you are provided meaningful counter-terror training to thwart new, deadly terrorist threats in the air.

The situation demands it, passengers deserve it, and flight attendants, whose lives are on the line, depend on it!

Together, we will prevail!

Thank you.